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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTIETH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 11 May 1992, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. ERDOS

(Hungary)

- Concluding statements (continued)
- Statement by the Chairman
- Closure of the session

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

CONCLUDING STATEMENTS (continued)

The CHAIRMAN: The Disarmament Commission, having adopted its report and begun hearing concluding statements, at its plenary meeting this morning, is now in the final stage of its work for the 1992 substantive session. I shall now call on those other representatives who also wish to make concluding statements.

Mr. PATOKALLIO (Finland): I shall make my statement on behalf of the delegations of the Nordic countries - Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Finland.

One week ago, on 4 and 5 May, the Foreign Ministers of the Nordic countries met in order to discuss various matters of common interest and concern, as they do three times a year. At the end of their meeting, held this time in Helsinki, they issued a joint statement on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. As many of the issues dealt with in the Nordic Foreign Ministers' statement are of great relevance to the work of this Commission, the Nordic delegations wish to draw the attention of other delegations to this important statement. I shall now highlight the few points made by the Nordic Foreign Ministers in their statement.

In their statement, they expressed their strong support for international treaties that ban or limit the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and for international export controls of missile technology and products that can be used in the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction. They called for a further strengthening of multilateral cooperation to this end. The Ministers emphasized that Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan should join the non-proliferation Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States as soon as possible.

(Mr. Patokallio, Finland)

The Ministers also stressed the need for progress in limiting and controlling the international trade in conventional weapons through negotiations between exporting countries. The Ministers also expressed their support for regional efforts towards stability in arms control, for example, in the Middle East, Central Asia and Latin America. The full text of the statement is available to interested delegations at the back of this conference room.

Before concluding, let me now take this opportunity to say, on behalf of my own delegation, a few words about the work of the Disarmament Commission this year. A key issue this year was, of course, objective information on military matters. Success or failure there was a test-case for the reformed Disarmament Commission as a whole. Although we would have been happier had the Commission endorsed the necessity of openness in military matters in a most forthright manner, we are none the less happy to see that it passed the test by adopting a substantive text by consensus. The text contains pertinent observations and recommendations without compromising fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter, as enshrined in the Charter. My delegation congratulates the Chairman of Working Group I, Ambassador Hyltenius, for a job well done.

The work of the other Working Groups proceeded much as expected. Useful work was done on the science and technology item. We are, however, disappointed that so little was achieved on the regional disarmament item, to which we attach particular importance.

(Mr. Patokallio, Finland)

Working Group III should focus on producing a limited number of uncluttered, forward-looking guidelines of use in advancing regional disarmament in various parts of the world. Undue concentration on references to past documents and on all manner of qualifiers and preconditions will not carry the work forward.

Finally, I wish to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the extended Bureau for the tireless efforts expended in our common cause.

Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia) (interpretation from Spanish): Let me express my delegation's satisfaction at having been able, Sir, to rely on your skilful and distinguished guidance as Chairman of the Commission. We also congratulate your fine associates, the other Commission officers and the Secretariat staff, for whose cooperation and dedicated work we are most grateful.

Today, the question of international arms transfers has assumed priority on the United Nations agenda. Widespread ethnic, subregional and regional conflicts highlights the urgency of that question. The most important of those conflicts, the Gulf war, compels us to reflect on its origin, its consequences and the responsibility of each party.

It cannot be denied that the excessive accumulation of weapons in that region fomented a devastating war. Had there existed a code of international conduct on arms transfers, that war would not have taken place or would at least have been on a smaller scale. The same could be said of other past and present conflicts, fuelled, encouraged and exacerbated both by so-called legal and by illicit arms transfers.

Judging from statements by Heads of State or Government - which we assume are begining to constitute a new code of ethics and a new way of regarding

(Mr. Jaramillo, Colombia)

this gruesome commerce - we can begin to hope that the countries that manufacture, sell and export weapons will take steps leading to a serious and responsible management of the production of weapons and their transfer to other countries.

One of those steps is the anticipated broadening of the Register of Conventional Arms established in General Assembly resolution 46/36 L to make it non-discriminatory and universal. No less urgent and important are the steps the international community must take by the terms of resolution 46/36 H, adopted unanimously by the General Assembly; that resolution, inter alia, sets out various measures to prevent and ultimately to eliminate illicit arms trafficking.

There is no need to repeat what my delegation has said repeatedly about the evil effects of a clearly illicit trade whose objective it is to alter the constitutional order and the peace of the countries to which the weapons come, and which continues to undermine the efforts towards peace we are pursuing with such sacrifice and such hope both in our region and in other areas of conflict.

But we cannot remain silent in the face of this traffic in death and devastation that strikes at our dignity and sovereignty under the impassive gaze of the countries that produce and sell these weapons. It is true that these weapons represent lucrative earnings for the producer countries and the businesses that manufacture and sell them, but for our peoples they mean only blood, desolation and misery. Respect and concern for the security of the various regions of the world will have to become more important than the money involved here, if the lofty principles of the Charter are ever to be realized. I can only say that the measures set out in resolution 46/36 H cannot be postponed.

(Mr. Jaramillo, Colombia)

Although there have been other important proposals on non-proliferation, my delegation calls on the States here participating in the deliberations of the Disarmament Commission to consider without delay the need to consider at the Commission's next session the various measures set out in resolution 46/36 H so that at the 1992 organizational session the issue of international arms transfers will be included on the agenda of the 1993 substantive session in accordance with paragraph 10 of that resolution. That would make a decisive contribution to translating the goal of strengthening international peace and security into concrete, effective measures and instruments, rather than into today's hollow rhetoric.

Mr. COLLINS (Ireland): Before beginning the formal part of my statement, I should like to carry out a no less formal and important duty, which is to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau for the tremendous work you have done in running the Disarmament Commission this year. I should like especially to mention the patience and good humour with which you have carried out your onerous duties. This comes as no surprise to the Irish delegation, given your personal merits and those of the grand country you represent.

The purpose of the present intervention by the delegation of Ireland is to attempt to draw conclusions from the 1992 session and to set a context and perhaps seek a point of perspective for the work of the Disarmament Commission in the future. It is not that the Irish have any special qualifications in relation to the issues I have mentioned. However, as a nation we prefer to look at the wood in its entirety rather than at each individual tree. From this viewpoint we think there is always a danger when bureaucrats gather together of, as my countryman James Joyce put it in Finnegans Wake, "dislocated reason".

(Mr. Collins, Ireland)

The first point to underline is that this is a deliberative and not a negotiating body. Therefore, the essence of our work is to deliberate and if possible to think. It seems to me that we have been rather successful at these aspects of our work. I do not seek to diminish the value of arriving at agreed papers to give shape, so to speak, to the product and to market it intelligently to the consumer. That is important; nevertheless, we must not, in the pursuit of the appropriate wrapping material, neglect the quintessential product.

In that context, what we have achieved during this session of the Disarmament Commission is significant. We have managed to finalize the issue of objective information on military matters. The pessimists, and even the occasional optimist, may object that we could have achieved more. We certainly could. But it is not always possible to achieve perfection. We have done a good, if not a perfect, day's work, in my opinion.

The Working Group on nuclear disarmament also made significant progress in drawing up an outline of its future document. Several significant contributions were made both orally and by way of written submissions. My delegation will be forgiven, I hope, for taking a particular pleasure in having presented our own working paper on nuclear disarmament issues and a general pleasure in having been part of the team of the 12 member States of the European Community who also presented a working paper on nuclear disarmament issues. That working paper, as the representative of the presidency of the European Community said in introducing it, represents our common views. Its very existence makes a point of fundamental political importance, namely that, while we can and must diverge, we can and must also converge. Useful progress was also made in the two remaining Working Groups, which are scheduled to complete their work next year.

(Mr. Collins, Ireland)

I need to ask, then, why I detect that people remain somewhat uncomfortable with the results of this year's session of the Disarmament Commission. If we were to look at it in terms of clear, concise and rational achievement, perhaps the results we have achieved are disappointing. Sometimes, the results of our endeavours, even when we get roughly what we want, can be disappointing; sometimes, our aims, once implemented, do not live up to the expectations we hold for them. Acknowledging this, I see little else wrong with our way of work given that we are a deliberative body. The results we have achieved reflect the reality outside these halls.

As to the immediate future, my delegation's view is that we should seek to conclude next year our discussion of regional disarmament and science and technology. We feel that the issue of nuclear disarmament could benefit from more prolonged discussion. We consider it would be useful, therefore, to continue our deliberations on this issue next year with a view to concluding them, with an agreed document, in 1994.

My delegation notes the proposal by Sweden to inscribe the question of non-proliferation with special emphasis on weapons of mass destruction on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission. The issue of non-proliferation is one to which Ireland attaches major importance, and we would be very glad to join in any consultations which may take place on this issue.

It is important in our deliberations not to replace the cold war rhetoric and its certainties with new gods of certainty. Having pensioned off, so to speak, the old gods, we ought to ensure that the new ones are a little more tolerant. In that context, since I set out to introduce a sense of perspective into our deliberations and said that the Irish had no special

(Mr. Collins, Ireland)

gifts in this area, let me end by quoting a man who does have a sense of perspective. Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev spoke many words of wisdom in a recent speech. The wisdom of the author and of his words call attention to themselves and do not need me to do so. Nevertheless, I think that some of those words could help us to achieve a sense of balance. My delegation therefore has the honour, in concluding, to read some of the words of Mikhail Gorbachev into the records of the Commission.

"We live today in a watershed era. One epoch has ended and a second is commencing. No one yet knows how concrete it will be - no one. Having long been orthodox Marxists, we were sure that we knew. But life once again has refuted those who claim to be know-it-alls and Messiahs."

Mr. AKALOVSKY (United States of America): As this year's substantive session of the Disarmament Commission comes to a close, permit me, first of all, to say how much my delegation appreciates the stewardship you, Mr. Chairman, have provided in the course of the session. In performing your functions you have once again demonstrated your high personal and professional qualities so well known to all those of us who have had the pleasure and privilege to work with you on earlier occasions. My delegation is also grateful for the contributions to the Commission's work by the other members of the Bureau and by those who carried the heavy burden of guiding our day-to-day deliberations, the Chairmen of the Working Groups.

In providing assistance to the Commission, members of the Office of Disarmament Affairs displayed during this session their usual professionalism and efficiency. Their efforts are greatly appreciated by my delegation, as are those of the interpreters and other Secretariat staff without whose support the Commission could not function.

(Mr. Akalovsky, United States)

My delegation is gratified that this session has succeeded in completing item 4 on its agenda, "Objective information on military matters", by achieving consensus on a document entitled "Guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters". This important result was made possible by the spirit of cooperation and compromise prevailing in Working Group I, but also in no small measure by the dedication and untiring efforts of that Group's Chairman, Ambassador Hyltenius of Sweden. My delegation, as we are sure do all others, deeply appreciates the fairness, patience and purposefulness with which he handled his by no means easy task. We are also indebted to you, Mr. Chairman, and to Ambassador Hohenfellner of Austria for laying a good foundation for this year's work on this subject in chairing the Working Group respectively in 1991 and 1990.

The United States firmly believes that openness and transparency in military matters increase confidence among nations and thus can contribute to international stability and security. We had hoped, therefore, that the Commission would produce an endorsement of the provision of objective information on military matters that was not as heavily caveated as the one adopted this morning. It is true, of course, that legitimate national security considerations impose certain limits on the extent of military information that can be divulged. The document, as adopted, recognizes that. But, in our opinion, it also tends to make provision of such information conditional on too many other factors. In fact, it even contains some internal contradictions. For example, it states that all States have the duty to provide objective information on military matters, but also suggests that provision of such information could constitute intervention or interference in the internal affairs of States - a notion which is difficult to understand and

(Mr. Akalovsky, United States)

accept. Nevertheless, the United States views the overall document as a positive step, one that, along with General Assembly resolution 46/36 L on transparency in armaments, may lead to the eventual recognition by all States of the contribution openness and transparency can make to stability at all levels - internal, regional and global.

With your permission, Mr. Chairman, my delegation would now like to make a few brief observations on the deliberations which took place in the other three Working Groups.

As regards Working Group II, dealing with nuclear disarmament issues, we welcome the practically unanimous acknowledgement in that Group of the important strides made by the United States and Russia in the area of nuclear arms reductions. We also appreciate that many delegations shared our concern about the nuclear weapons still remaining in several newly independent States that were parts of the former Soviet Union. On the other hand, while we welcome the improvement in the atmosphere in this Group, we regret that on most issues of substance the deliberations indicated a continued and widespread unwillingness to adjust traditional positions to new realities.

We are deeply disappointed that so little progress was made in Working Group III, which deliberated on regional disarmament issues. In part, the Group's failure to advance in its work may have been due to the structure of its proceedings. The fundamental reason, however, in our view, was that the positions of a number of delegations continued to consist of what the delegation of Finland in its opening statement on 20 April so aptly described, and deplored, as fossilized ideas. Some apparently refuse to admit that the world has dramatically changed since 1978 and that their approach of making their own participation in the process of arms limitation or reduction

(Mr. Akalovsky, United States)

conditional on global disarmament is no longer sustainable, if it ever was. We have noted with satisfaction, however, a gradual evolution towards greater realism in the positions of an increasing number of delegations and hope that this trend will continue at a more rapid pace.

With regard to Working Group IV, on science and technology, my delegation welcomes the moderate progress we made in advancing our deliberations and further defining the issues at hand. This topic is now two years old, and yet it remains a new one for the United Nations - a topic in which the views and perspectives are wide ranging and diverse.

My delegation is optimistic that in the final year of this topic, next year, we might be able to make some progress in further identifying areas for common ground and possible recommendations. In particular, we are very pleased that all delegations recognize the importance of science and technology for disarmament. We believe that additional progress can be made in identifying areas in which disarmament-related science and technology is applied, including weapons disposal and destruction, military conversion, and the negotiation and verification of disarmament agreements.

Finally, my delegation will continue to welcome a dialogue on issues related to controlling exports and use of technologies with military applications, especially as this dialogue could strengthen existing non-proliferation arrangements by bringing about a better appreciation of, and increased participation in, those arrangements.

(Mr. Akalovsky, United States)

The experience of this session, where we concluded only one item on the Disarmament Commission agenda, has given us a clear signal that the resources of delegations, especially smaller ones, will be highly strained next year when three agenda items are scheduled for conclusion. Moreover, there will be a high demand on the time and facilities available for Working Group meetings.

We are aware that you, Mr. Chairman, have already given thought to this problem. For our part, we believe that, since there is no requirement for the Disarmament Commission to have four items on its agenda, the simplest and perhaps most practical way to alleviate the problem would be in not replacing the objective information item with a new one this year. We are looking forward to the consultations you plan to hold between now and the 1993 Disarmament Commission organizational session in December of this year, when appropriate decisions will have to be taken.

Mr. SEIM (Norway): I have asked to speak at this final plenary meeting to make a few observations. However, let me first express our appreciation for the way in which you have guided our deliberations, Mr. Chairman.

This year's session of the Disarmament Commission has taken place in a good atmosphere and in a spirit of constructive cooperation. The discussions have, to a large extent, been result-oriented. My delegation is encouraged that the reform package adopted in 1990 has strengthened the role of the Disarmament Commission as a deliberative body for considering and making recommendations on proposals in the field of disarmament.

The conclusion of the agenda item on objective information on military matters is most promising. The adoption of the report by consensus is an additional effort towards openness and transparency in military matters. We

(Mr. Seim, Norway)

are grateful for the manner in which Ambassador Hyltenius of Sweden conducted the discussions as Chairman of Working Group I.

In accordance with the reform package adopted in 1990, all the three remaining items on our agenda are, in principle, to be finalized in 1993. Much work remains to be done before that can be achieved. The report on nuclear disarmament is a good basis for future work. However, my delegation had hoped that it would have been possible to make further headway on regional disarmament.

As for the item on science and technology, my delegation supports the idea put forward by the European Community that a further focusing of the work seems necessary to facilitate the development of concrete recommendations next year. We share the view that the Disarmament Commission should concentrate on the role of science and technology in the context of disarmament.

In implementing the basic thrust of the reform programme, much time and resources have to be allocated to each of the three remaining agenda items at our next session. In my delegation's view, taking into account the necessity during this year's session to allocate more time to Working Group I, it might still be difficult to finalize all three agenda items next year.

There are always various solutions to a practical problem. One solution would be to postpone the final work on one of the agenda items until 1994. This would leave us with only two issues to finalize during next year's session. My delegation is flexible as to which agenda item should eventually be left over to 1994. On this question, we would go along with the issue that commands consensus.

(Mr. Seim, Norway)

Various issues have been proposed both formally and informally to replace the agenda item on objection information on military matters. In our opinion, non-proliferation, illicit arms trade, transparency in armaments and verification are all questions that merit consideration by the Disarmament Commission. However, given the political concern regarding proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, there would probably be a broad interest to address this question, as proposed by Sweden. The Nordic position regarding non-proliferation was stated last week by the Foreign Ministers of the Nordic countries. Here I refer to the statement just made by my Finnish colleague. The question of replacement of the item on objective information on military matters should be subject to further consultations before a final decision is reached.

Despite the promising developments during this year's session, further improvements in the structure and functioning of the Disarmament Commission seem necessary. In this regard, the role of the Disarmament Commission as a deliberative body should be underlined. We should be careful not to allow the Disarmament Commission to be transformed into a negotiating body. Its primary functions should continue to be of a deliberative nature.

Mr. LI Genxin (China) (interpretation from Chinese): The 1992 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission is drawing to a successful conclusion. On this occasion, please allow me, in the name of the Chinese delegation, to thank you Sir, for the effective and excellent manner in which you conducted our deliberations and for your contribution to the smooth fulfilment of our mandate for this session. At the same time, I should also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Ambassador Carl-Magnus Hyltenius of Sweden, who was Chairman of Working

(Mr. Li Genxin, China)

Group I and who worked very hard to complete consideration of agenda item 4 with outstanding leadership. I should also like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Prakash Shah of India, Ambassador Ricardo Luna of Peru, Ambassador Emika Ayo Azikiwe of Nigeria, for their excellent work. I also extend our thanks to Mr. Davinic, Director of the Office of Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung and other officials of the Office. Our thanks also go to the Secretaries, translators and interpreters for their effective cooperation.

This session was convened at a time of drastic changes in the international situation. The international community is now more committed to the establishment of a new international order on the basis of the objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter. The relevant norms governing international relations have been emphasized. During the last three weeks, we have had comprehensive and in-depth deliberations on the four substantive items on the agenda of this session in an earnest, pragmatic and cooperative atmosphere. We have also completed the deliberations on the item on objective information on military matters as called for by the reform of the Disarmament Commission, come up with a consensus text and achieved preliminary results. We are, therefore, very pleased.

However, we must also emphasize that this success is only preliminary. The task ahead of us is still enormous. Hence, it is our hope that the various delegations will continue to pursue the spirit of constructive cooperation present in the deliberations on the item on objective information on military matters and that we shall redouble our efforts in order to complete the deliberations on the other three substantive agenda items on time.

(Mr. Li Genxin, China)

The Chinese delegation has always attached great importance to and actively participated in the work of the Disarmament Commission. We have adopted a constructive approach on all four substantive items and submitted working papers. We have also studied very seriously the working papers and proposals submitted by other delegations. The Chinese delegation has spared no effort to enhance progress at this session and fully demonstrated a spirit of constructive cooperation and compromise.

In the general debate at the beginning of the session, the Chinese delegation pointed out that the task of this year's session was enormous. The result of our work will have an important impact on the role of the Disarmament Commission. It is our hope that the outcome of the deliberations on the item on objective information on military matters will augur well for the deliberations on the other three substantive items next year.

Ms. PRIEST (United Kingdom): At the conclusion of this year's substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, my delegation would like to express its thanks to you, Mr. Chairman, for the skill and wisdom with which you have guided our work. Our thanks extend to the Chairmen of all the Working Groups, to the Disarmament Commission Bureau as a whole, and to the Secretariat.

I should like to place on record that it is with particular satisfaction that my delegation welcomes the successful conclusion of the work of Working Group I, which has produced within the time scale envisaged agreed guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters. This item on the streamlined agenda of the Disarmament Commission is one in which my delegation, from the very outset, has taken a close and sustained interest.

That we now have an agreed set of guidelines and recommendations illustrates three basic points. It shows that the streamlined approach to the Disarmament Commission can and does promote a businesslike and efficient way of handling our work. It demonstrates also that it is possible to reach consensus in this body on substantive guidelines and recommendations in fields with which we concern ourselves. This augurs well for the future.

The successful outcome of Working Group I attests also to the skill and dedication of its Chairman, Ambassador Carl-Magnus Hyltenius of Sweden, about whom other delegations, quite rightly in our view, have been fulsome in their praise. That he was able to guide the Working Group to a successful outcome is a tribute not only to his own invaluable contribution to its deliberations but also to the determination and commitment of all delegations to ensuring that the item was reported out this year in accordance with the previously agreed timetable.

Mr. SHOUKRY (Egypt): The delegation of Egypt would like to take this opportunity, on the occasion of the concluding meeting of the 1992 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, to convey to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the Chairmen of the four Working Groups, sincere congratulations on the excellent and productive manner in which our work has been conducted. Thanks are also to be extended to the members of the Secretariat of the Commission and the Office for Disarmament Affairs for their competent and valuable assistance.

We note with satisfaction that Working Group I was able this year to conclude its work on objective information on military matters with the adoption of its report, contained in document A/CN.10/1992/CRP.3. This result undoubtedly confirms the relevance of the adopted ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission and offers reassurance that the Disarmament Commission is capable of achieving tangible results in advancing the objectives of disarmament. The consensus reached in the context of the deliberations of Working Group I was achieved by the high level of cooperation and flexibility displayed by all delegations with a view to promoting openness and transparency in military matters, thereby enhancing the primary objective of general and complete disarmament of all types of weapons. My delegation looks forward to the conclusion of the three remaining substantive items on our agenda during next year's session of the Disarmament Commission in the same spirit and with the equal dedication displayed this year in addressing objective information on military matters.

Concerning the annex of the report of Working Group I, my delegation would like to draw attention to paragraph 12. It is my delegation's understanding that the reference "further developed" refers to the eventual expansion of the scope of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

Mr. WHANNOU (Benin) (interpretation from French): Today more than ever, our Organization faces the greatest challenge of our times: the strengthening of peace and security, which must be guaranteed by the establishment of a collective security system in keeping with the letter and spirit of the San Francisco Charter. The process of general and complete disarmament under international control, as recommended by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978, is within the purview of this common undertaking, given the fact that the excessive accumulation of all kinds of weapons has been one of the characteristics of our time, in which each State is concerned for its own security to the detriment of the security of others.

The Disarmament Commission's work is an important step towards security for all. As the organ for multilateral deliberations on disarmament bringing together all Member States, the Commission is entrusted with elaborating concrete, joint disarmament measures in the form of recommendations to the General Assembly. To that end, its agenda this year included four distinct items particularly directed towards the future: objective information on military matters; process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons; regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security; and role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields.

We are pleased that the consideration of the first of these items led to concrete measures consisting of provisions that can increase awareness and help achieve progress in the disarmament process. To date, it has been impossible to obtain objective and qualitative information on factors to be taken into account in negotiations, especially since States intending to

(Mr. Whannou, Benin)

protect their interests against any real or potential threat have not been prepared to allow others to penetrate the arcane secrets of their military technology and installations. Hence the resort to secret methods, the only result of which was useless information that only increased suspicion and thereby the risk of confrontation. How could we prevent the threat of weapons of mass destructions if we had no resort to appropriate information and objective communication machinery that would make it possible to eliminate anxieties, fears and one-upmanship?

Regarding the other three substantive agenda items, we were able to identify elements that could be incorporated into our in-depth discussions at the next session. We therefore hope that the same spirit of joint effort and understanding that prevailed this year will allow us to achieve concrete recommendations in 1993, especially since, in conformity with the the text governing the streamlining of the work of our Commission, we are called upon to conclude those three items. We know that it cannot be otherwise, because everybody today is aware of the danger, cost and futility of overarmament. Moreover, any State engaged in overarming only causes concern to others, beginning with its immediate neighbours.

Therefore, we shall have to come to an understanding at all levels - regional and international - to subjugate the belligerent sides of science and technology that have led to qualitative and quantitative increases in weapons over the past 50 years through inter-State rivalries. Now that these rivalries are subsiding, we shall have to limit the diversion of resources so necessary to meeting the normal, everyday needs of mankind in order to curtail the potential of nations for aggression.

(Mr. Whannou, Benin)

As we approach the end of our substantive work in 1992, our delegation would like to thank all those who have been involved in the Commission's work and contributed to progress in the cause of disarmament.

Mr. STELZER (Austria): Before contributing some brief concluding remarks on the 1992 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, the Austrian delegation would like to commend you, Sir, on the results achieved under your chairmanship. You were entrusted with the responsibility not only of facilitating the deliberations of the four Working Groups but also of securing concrete results on the agenda item in its third year, "Objective information on military matters"; besides providing the intellectual input we expected of you, you also displayed remarkable organizational leadership by skilfully allocating the available time to the concluding work in Working Group I and to the deliberations of the other three Working Groups.

My delegation would also like, through you, to thank the Chairmen of the four Working Groups. Ambassador Hyltenius successfully concluded the work on objective information on military matters - an agenda item on which the Austrian Ambassador, Peter Hohenfellner, had the privilege of conducting the first year of deliberations. By concluding this agenda item on schedule, Ambassador Hyltenius made an essential contribution to the future of the reformed Disarmament Commission.

I would also like to thank Ambassador Shah of India, Ambassador Luna of Peru and Ambassador Azikiwe of Nigeria, who skilfully chaired the other Working Groups. With their contribution they have laid a solid groundwork for the last round of deliberations on their respective agenda items.

My delegation would also like to express sincere thanks to Ambassador Mason, who successfully chaired the Group of Friends of the Chairman in Working Group IV.

(Mr. Stelzer, Austria)

The timely adoption of the consensus text on guidelines and recommendations with respect to objective information on military matters has proved that the Disarmament Commission can fulfil the high expectations expressed in numerous statements during the general debate at this substantive session. My delegation considers that document to be a cornerstone of the Disarmament Commission. We foresee that it will have an impact on the process of increasing transparency in military matters and will make a contribution to confidence- and security-building. Thus will it enhance international peace and security.

At the successful conclusion of the 1992 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, my delegation would like to make some remarks on the future procedure of the Disarmament Commission. Practical work at this year's session, and comments by delegations, show a remarkable measure of agreement on the reform of the Commission put into practice last year. My delegation agrees that the reform has provided the Commission with an adequate working structure. Nevertheless, some fine-tuning of the structure on the basis of the experience of this year and last year might have some merit.

The prospect of next year's special session, which by current provisions is required to conclude consideration of the remaining three substantive agenda items, while at the same time initiating deliberations on a new item, might justify some modifications.

Mr. Chairman, my delegation will carefully consider the suggestions you made last week on how to approach this problem, and we look forward to participating in consultations on this issue during the year.

(Mr. Stelzer, Austria)

Regarding the future work of the Disarmament Commission, my delegation would like to add an additional consideration to the useful suggestions made in previous statements. We believe that the three-year time-frame provided for the deliberations on each agenda item requires a systematic approach to discussion. As was suggested earlier, the Chairman of a Working Group should not simply take up what a predecessor in that Working Group concluded in the deliberations of the previous year. My delegation has repeatedly emphasized the importance of inter-sessional consultations to be conducted by the Chairmen of the Working Groups prior to the substantive session. Those consultations could preclude the time-consuming procedural discussions that repeatedly consume scarce time during the substantive sessions, and could prepare the general outline of the substantive deliberations in order to provide for the effective utilization of the three weeks available during the substantive session.

In spite of my remarks on how we would suggest the Commission make its deliberations even more successful in the future, my delegation agrees with the very positive assessments of this year's session made by previous speakers. The 1992 Disarmament Commission did not appear to be a sick patient; a few modifications will make it strong in a very positive environment. We believe that at this point the Disarmament Commission has passed the test of effectiveness, and we trust that under your chairmanship, Sir, you will be able in the course of the consultations I am sure you will be holding during the rest of the year to provide an ideal framework for next year's deliberations.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The CHAIRMAN: Let me share a few words of summary and reflection as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at this 1992 session, which we shall be concluding in a few minutes. There can be no doubt that the last three weeks have been hard on all delegations, but their hard work has also brought undeniable results.

In the field where we have to perform our duties - the field of international security and disarmament - results are difficult to measure. Sometimes the temptation of verbosity is hard to resist. One finds brevity and clarity difficult to achieve. We have to reckon with the fact that in the field of international security and disarmament concrete measures can only be taken by the unanimous will of all the parties concerned. Consequently, specific proposals designed to lead to such measures had better be made with a great measure of unanimity. In the course of the past three weeks the aspiration to achieve unanimity - to adopt every single sentence, sometimes every word or even letter, by consensus - has prevailed over everything else.

Delegations have manifested a desire to achieve consensus on almost every question. They also showed a fair amount of readiness to reach that consensus. Whenever the matter in question had a direct bearing on the real issue, consensus was usually reached, even if not always easily. Whenever consensus was really difficult to reach - or in some cases when it remained hopelessly beyond reach and when substantive ideas or recommendations had to be abandoned - this was ultimately due to various considerations which in fact had little relevance to the heart of the issue. As I see it, in most cases such considerations have only diverted attention from the real subject-matter; they led to long debates and always carried with them the threat of failure.

(The Chairman)

This phenomenon is obviously not a novelty. It has often prevailed in the past in the Commission's activities; it has prevailed in other forums inside and outside the United Nations. The phenomenon was long considered a natural consequence of international relations basically characterized by cold-war confrontation. With all the dramatic changes of recent years, however, that phenomenon is clearly outdated. It can only serve to prevent progress in the desired concrete directions. It can prevent the Disarmament Commission from attaining the purposeful utility it was created to provide.

(The Chairman)

On the other hand, it is encouraging in this context that the perception of delegations and their overall evaluation of the work of the 1992 session of the Disarmament Commission are impregnated, perhaps more than before, by a sense of sober realism and critical attitude indicating equally the bright aspects of our work and those areas where, in the view of many, we have yet to exert additional efforts to live up to the expectations of the international community. I believe that this down-to-earth approach should also guide us in the future.

The year 1992 was the second year for the Commission to work in its new organizational framework. In the past two years the Commission has been able to live up to the expectations, in spite of difficulties and various limitations of time and logistics. Under such circumstances, the results achieved in the four Working Groups, and most of all the valuable document produced in Working Group I, must be appreciated even more. However, if the Commission wants fully to live up to all the expectations, if it wants to benefit from the historic changes of our times, modifications are required in the ways and means of its operation. These modifications are called for by the extremely heavy workload delegations will have to handle next year, and most probably in the years to come.

In the course of this session, extensive discussions focused on the need for certain changes in the structuring of the Commission's work, in the distribution of subjects over the years, and for other possible modifications, which all could serve to refine the present system of activity. Discussions will continue in the following months and, we hope, will lead to certain practical steps to take at the organizational session later in the year.

(The Chairman)

I am fully convinced that, if delegations take a fresh look into the future, and if they also manage to make the appropriate corrections, the Disarmament Commission will certainly become the kind of forum that was envisaged by so many for so long.

Before concluding my statement, I wish to state clearly that all the progress and all the success achieved during this session was due in no small measure to the excellent guidance and leadership displayed by the Chairmen of the subsidiary bodies. On behalf of all the delegations, and on my own behalf, I wish to express our appreciation to Ambassador Carl-Magnus Hyltenius of Sweden, who guided Working Group I, over difficult and sometimes even rough waters, to full success. As we all know, we were particularly interested in seeing Working Group I terminate its work and carry out its mandate successfully and on time. These efforts were brought to fruition most happily. The applause of members of Working Group I at 9.30 Friday night marked a new phase in the Commission's history, and not only the end of three years' efforts. It proved for everyone that a reasonable degree of success is possible. This example, and naturally the valuable chairmanships of Ambassador Prakash Shah of India, Ambassador Ricardo Luna and his deputy Mr. Javier Paulinich of Peru, and Ambassador Emeka Ayo Azikiwe of Nigeria, reinforce us in our conviction that the other Working Groups will also achieve the desired outcome.

Let me extend our gratitude to all the Vice-Chairmen, as well as to the Rapporteur of the Commission, Mr. Bob Hiensch of the Netherlands, for their assistance.

(The Chairman)

I am sure all delegations join me in expressing sincere thanks to Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, as well as to the members of the Office of Disarmament Affairs, under the direction of Mr. Prvoslav Davinic, for the invaluable support they have provided throughout the entire session. We are particularly grateful to Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung, long-time Secretary of the Commission, Mr. Timur Alasaniya, Ms. Jennifer Mackby and Ms. Lucy Webster, who served as secretaries of Working Groups. Their advice and assistance were always indispensable. Our thanks and appreciation is also addressed to the Conference and Documents Officers, and our friends behind the glass in the back of this room who not only had to listen to our often lengthy statements but also had to understand them and interpret them faithfully and patiently.

In conclusion, I wish to express, on behalf of all the members of the extended Bureau, and also on behalf of the Secretariat, as well as on my own behalf, sincere thanks to the representatives for the kind words they expressed to us. We can assure them of our reciprocal feelings - all the more so as expressions of appreciation are due, first and foremost, to the members of the delegations themselves. Without their good will and cooperation such happy results could not have been achieved. Let me, therefore, thank you all for your support, as well as for the honour of having afforded me the opportunity to chair the Disarmament Commission in 1992.

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

The CHAIRMAN: I declare the 1992 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission closed.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.